

GOOD TASTE

The Newsflash of the Thunder Bay Atari ST Enthusiasts *June 1991*

PREZ REPORT

This month, I'll be covering the May meeting, talk about the summer schedule for the Club, and conclude with a few words about AIM.

Farewell to Roy

It was with a strong feeling of nostalgia that we said goodbye to vice-president and treasurer, Roy Stokes. Roy is one of the founding members of TASTE, and has served the Club willingly and well for the past four years. As the vice-president, he was always available to help out with various suggestions for the operation of the Club, and formulate the policies that we followed with regard to anti-piracy. In his capacity as the Treasurer, the club books were kept meticulously correct and up to date.

Roy is leaving the Club mainly because of his heavy work load as Technical Director in charge of CAD development at Westgate Collegiate. The machines used in his lab are IBM clones, and the need for him to devote as much time as he possibly can to that type of machine is understandable. Thanks very much for all the trouble and time that you have taken in the past four years to support our Club. On behalf of the membership, allow me to wish you the very best in the future, Roy.

Ken Owen provided us with an update about Atari Canada and the problems with regard to getting support from them. In contrast, support by the parent company in Europe is quite strong. Let's hope that the situation will improve here in Canada. Ken will continue to support the Atari at the Thunder Bay Mall branch of Mikadon. Ken also gave us an excellent demo of the game 'Lemmings'. It has its quota of vaporising the 'things' in many unique ways. Do pick up this game at the Mall.

Jim Dick gave us a demo of the disk of the month. There were several good programs on the disk. Single sided disks will be available for Gerry Maggrah. Keep up the good work, Jim.

Neville Riddell mentioned that we should have a database session as soon as we can arrange. If you recall, databases and their use were scheduled for this meeting. My apologies for not bringing Datamanager to the meeting. We *will* have a demo of various databases when we meet again in September.

Club Officers

Charlie Briden proposed that elections be postponed until September, since there was no point in changing the setup this late in the Club year. Those present agreed to this suggestion. I will continue to look after the Club's affairs in the interim, with Charlie acting as the secretary. Roy has handed over Club accounts to me. I hereby state that all accounts are in order, and the balance in the Club's account as of the 29th May 1991 stands at \$347.28.

Gerry Maggrah asked about converting a SS drive to a DS drive. Mikadon will be able to do this for a reasonable price, according to Ken. Other topics that were discussed

included problems with upgrading, and availability of software.

Summer Schedule.

In previous years, we did hold a meeting in June, before we took a summer holiday in July and August. This year, we are forced to cancel the June meeting due to renovations at the hangar, College holidays, and so on. A combined newsletter will be published for July and August; I will keep you informed.

(Next meeting in September)

Miscellaneous

Charlie Briden has recently bought a complete IBM 386 setup running at 33 MHz, 4 mb of memory, 100 meg hard drive, and more. However, he intends to keep his Mega 2. I would like to thank Charlie for bringing his machine to all the Club meetings this past year. Fred Briden did quite well at the science contest held in Vancouver. Congratulations, Fred, and we wish you the best in the future.

AIM magazine.

I got a phone call from Pattry Rayl apologising for the delay in sending AIM, and the April issue which you have was received shortly thereafter. You would have noticed that our Club is mentioned on the page opposite the contents page, and on page 53. Let me hasten to add that the typo errors were not entirely my doing!! There is a lot of useful material in the magazine. It is quite interesting to read about the various user groups and how they operate.

Have an enjoyable summer, and I will be keeping in touch with you through the newsletter before I see you all in September.

Neville Denetto

ST ACCELERATORS

by Norm Weinress

How fast is faster, and how?

Most new users of Atari products are impressed with their speed.

Windows in GEM move and programs load pretty quickly when compared to Mac or IBM counterparts. But familiarity breeds contempt, and we heavy users constantly look for ways to make the fast faster.

Your choices for speeding up your ST or STE are increasing. There are new products announced by *FAST Technology, Gadgets by Small, ICD and several German companies*. Atari itself is producing the Mega/STe, which is essentially the 1040 STe with an accelerated processor. These devices have taken two directions and it might be useful for you to know something about them.

The idea of an accelerator is to replace the

microprocessor in your ST computer, a Motorola 68000 running at 8 megaHertz, with something faster. The first direction is to use another 68000, but one running at a faster rate. That rate is usually 16mHz (twice as fast as the original), though 20mHz devices have been announced for release later this year.

The advantage of this method is that most software will continue to work on the souped-up ST, but not quite all. A few programs and add-on systems are very sensitive to clock speed, and can't adjust to faster processing. So, these acceleration devices generally come with a switch that lets you slow down to 8mHz for those balky programs. Not all of them accomplish a 100% complete 8mHz mode, however - check it before you buy if you need Spectrum 512 pictures, for example.

The second method of speeding up is to use the newer and more powerful 68030 microprocessor, the one that comes with the Atari TT. You'll also need the new TT TOS to make it work, and fortunately Atari has consented to license their TOS for accelerators. This method can really zip along, both because of the inherently faster processing of the 68030 and the selection of available processor chips ranging up to 50mHz. Of course, all this can also cause havoc with some programs, so one manufacturer puts a 68000 on the same board so you can switch over to it for programs that won't run on the new system. Very clever. Of course, you pay for this versatility.

If you can stand some more technical talk, bear with me. Because the ST's internal systems must run at the original speed, and the data processing must share the pathways with the ST's screen display system, *just adding a faster processor doesn't generate a big speedup*. Early accelerators, introduced two years ago, were very disappointing because of that.

To REALLY speed things up, the newer boards incorporate fast cache memories. What these do is to transfer the portion of the system memory that is currently being used by the program you're working with, into a special, fast RAM that is on the accelerator board. So, while the regular, slow memory is crawling along and sharing time with the screen display system, your accelerator is running the program in this backup copy of the data in fast RAM, with no need to share it's time with the screen.

Now your program runs like greased lightning! When appropriate, the data in fast RAM is written back to regular RAM and another section of the regular memory is written into the fast cache. This way, all the required info that should be saved to disk, or displayed on the monitor, happens like it's supposed to.

All the current accelerator boards for the ST and STe use this method. This is also how the Mega/STe accomplishes its 16mHz 68000 speed up.

There are small differences in the results you get within each of the two types of accelerator, mainly caused by the way the manufacturer decided to implement the cache. How important these differences are isn't really clear, because benchmarking programs aren't particularly good indicators of actual use.

The main thing is, the new accelerators can truly make your ST go like crazy. And they are getting better all the time.

But who should buy one? My advice is that if you are using programs that require a lot of memory and calculations, these devices are for YOU! Desktop publishing, CAD, big spreadsheets and the like, are much nicer to use with an accelerator. Just ask yourself how often and for how long you sit, tapping your fingers on the desk, waiting for a screen re-draw or a calculation. Divide your budget surplus by the number of taps to determine your true need for speed.

If you use your ST mostly for gaming, then an accelerator won't do much for you, except give you bragging rights at your local Atari club.

On second thought, that might be worth it after all.

- Norm Weinress

The products mentioned are available from:

Gadgets By Small
40 W. Littleton Blvd. #210-211
Littleton CO 80120
303-791-0253

Fast Technologies
P.O. box 578
Andover, MA 01810
508-745-3810

ICD Inc.
1220 Rock Street
Rockford, IL 61101
800-968-2228

BIO: Norm Weinress is an Atari developer and former co-owner of an Atari store in Southern California. He was an electronic engineer for TRW under Sig Hartmann. Norm also hosts the "Spuds" meetings each month for a variety of professional Atari users including programmers, musicians, and writers... but trust me, that's a whole other story.

GAME CHEATS ...

ROBOCOP II After the game has loaded and you are on the menu screen, press F3 to access the highscore table. Then type BAMBOOZULEM and press the HELP key and you should find yourself immune to enemy bullets. You are not completely invincible, however, as contact with sawblades and anything else that kills you instantly can still kill you.

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES When asked for a number from the manual's protection system, type in 8859 then 1506 and then input the correct number. You should now find that when you are playing the game pressing the HELP key will provide you with infinite energy.

WINGS OF DEATH When you get onto the menu screen type ST FOREVER (don't forget the space) and you should see some red flickering. Now use F1 to F10 to select various levels and weapons.

DEATH TRAP Play the game until you get a high score. Instead of typing your name, enter GIRLS and when you play the game F6, F7 and F8 will slowly refill your potion pots.

CAR-VUP Play until you get a high score and enter one of these codes as your name for the cheat to work.

PUSSYCAT - Gives you 9 lives.

BUMPER - Awards you with temporary invulnerability.

WHOOPIE - Magically takes you to the last level of the game.

HORROR ZOMBIES Here are the level codes for Levels 2 to 6: 2 - WOLFMAN; 3 - HAMMER; 4 - LUGOSI; 5 - NOSFERATU; 6 - GARLIC

TURRICAN Play the game until you get a high score and then, instead of typing in your name enter ANTIDOTE and you should be awarded with infinite lives.

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE Start a two player game and when you are asked for player one's name type in FIELDS OF FIRE and for player two IN A BIG COUNTRY. You should now be able to qualify even if you are total rubbish and come in 20th every race.

TOTAL RECALL When the game loads and the title screen appears type LISTEN TO THE WHALES and the screen should invert and you will have infinite the game and type JIMMY HENDRIX for infinite energy.

Happy Gaming Neville